Alex Farmand

Ms. Krafft

AML 2410, Section 8974

November 12, 2013

Detail and Imagery in *White Noise*

Author Don DeLillo brings the subject of death to life through his novel *White Noise*. In this novel, characters face multiple disasters and find themselves in rare and bizarre situations. In the beginning of *White Noise* the Gladney family typically functions as a normal family. However, it is clear by chapter twenty-two that the lives of those in the Gladney family are very out of the ordinary, as well as those of the other characters in the novel. Specifically in chapter twenty-two, DeLillo portrays his characters with some sense of urgency towards their lives, as this is the first chapter we truly see Jack Gladney realize that he his death is inevitable. DeLillo uses detailed imagery to communicate the sense of urgency Jack feels about death.

Trhoughout *White Noise*, DeLillo focuses on the fear of death and media as the reasoning for the crazy occurrences that happen. At this time, the characters are exposed to tragedies in their environment through the television. Due to these tragedies and disasters, those who never thought death could happen are starting to realize that it is a natural thing. However, they are still scared of it. The fact that the characters, especially Jack, are scared of death is important. This is because it gives readers and idea of why DeLillo might write in the detailed style that he does, particularly in chapter twenty-two.

DeLillo’s detailed writing style consists of much imagery to show Jack’s alertness. Once Jack finds out that Cotsakis has died, there is a paragraph that shows the detail of thoughts that go through his mind due to the worry he feels. He says, “I was suddenly aware of the dense environmental texture. The automatic doors opened and closed, breathing abruptly. Colors and odors seemed sharper. The sound of gliding feet emerged from a dozen other noises, from the sublittoral drone of maintenance systems, from the rustle of newsprint as shoppers scanned their horoscopes in the tabloids up front, from the whisper of elderly women with talcumed faces, from the steady rattle of cars going over a loose manhole cover just outside the entrance. Gliding feet. I heard them clearly, a sad numb shuffle in every aisle (DeLillo 130).” This paragraph is full of good examples of detailed imagery that can cause a reader to visualize the setting and be able to put him or herself into the text. With words phrases like “breathing abruptly,” “sound of gliding feet,” and “colors and odors seemed sharper” a reader can feel Jack’s tension through multiple senses.

DeLillo conquers the sense of urgency he wants readers to feel by using detail and imagery. At this point in the novel, it is important for readers to start understanding Jack’s changing character, and also to grasp the concept of the realization that death is a reality that DeLillo focuses on. DeLillo shows that although media and consumerism are growing with popularity, they can no longer hide the reality of death. This is tragic, yet vital for people to comprehend.